LITERARY LADIES

Lights Who Help Spread Boston's Fame.

BROWSING IN THE ATHENÆUM

Over Ancient Tomes and Modern Magazines—Julia Ward Howe and Elizabeth Peabody—Other Noted Women.

BOSTON, July 5, 1890.—[Special correspondence of THE HERALD.]—I had not been at the Athenæum in ten years. This morning I found seemingly the same women summering in its classic atmosphere who wintered there ten years ago. They had changed no more than had the solemn busts of Sumner and Webster and Adams, or the group representing Dr. Bowditch at his studies. I peered out through the windows that overlook the "Old Granary" burying grounds, where lie the bones of Franklin's parents and other worthies, and then I could have risen and asked the woman next me if she remembered the day I dropped an ancient tome with a bang from one of the mysterious upper alcoves. The Athenæum is

THE BOSTON WOMAN'S PANTHEON,

her Louvre, her Borghese gallery, her British museum. The old Athenæum was to her the visible representative of "culture." To the new Athenæum come the Boston university girls and the learned maidens from the Harvard Annex, and the women professors from Wellesley and woman par excellence, with her rather slight figure and her sober face and—when she is young at least—her mayflower complexion. The Athenæum is the Boston woman's happy literary hunting ground. Here Julia Ward Howe, and Mary A. Livermore, and Louise Chandler Moulton, and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps-Ward and Celia Thaxter and Lucy Larcom and Mrs. James T. Fields took to ink as naturally as a duck takes to water, and here the women of the younger group, Mrs. Margaret Deland and Sara Orne Jewett, and Norah Perry, and Ella Farman Pratt and Edna D. Cheney and their compeers do much of their browsing.

New York says Boston is losing its old literary prestige. It may be that the Nationalists group will never equal the Emersonians, but the reason is so much the stronger for cherishing the writers she still has, both those of the old and of the new school. Under the huge elms of the Common yesterday a white-haired woman who is herself a writer was talking to me of Julia Ward Howe, whom many women would call first citizen of this New England republic of women.

MY FRIEND REMEMBERS MRS. HOWE

as she played the organ in James Freeman Clarke's church in the prime of her young matronhood. Though we think of her now as uniting the literary worker with the best type of the society woman, in those days she let her intellectual interests dwarf her interest in millinery, and "looked like ten thousand frights," if it be not held sacrilegious to quote such an opinion. One day—this story sounds as if it ought to be told rather of Elizabeth Peabody—she came in from a walk quite flurried. "Do tell me," she asked hurriedly, "is there anything wrong about my appearance? It seemed to me that people were staring."

"Well, mother, it is very likely," answered one of her daughters, "your bonnet is hind side before."

By the time she went on the lecture platform this defect—let me for once be frank and say that I like a woman the better for it—had been in a large measure remedied, and my friend described for me the costume worn by Mrs. Howe on her first appearance in New York as a public speaker. It was a mauve foulard spotted with brown, and for her head she had a lace coiffure at once gracefully becoming and dignified.

At the time of the Sailors' National Fair in Boston, Mrs. Howe tended one of the stalls, and I have heard another woman who was then a young girl standing much in awe of the distinguished writer tell a little story of one of

THE HEARTIEST LAUGHS OF HER LIFETIME.

The booths were curtained at the back, and behind the curtains were kept reserve stock and all sorts of commodities. Now it happened that Mrs. Howe in an inauspicious moment stepped backward, lost her balance and fell through the draperies, landing in a bushel basket, doubled up with such scientific exactness as to be absolutely powerless before the task of straightening herself out again. The witness of this little incident retired behind the curtains of the next booth and stuffed a handkerchief into her mouth for some minutes before she could command a properly respectful countenance with which to go and lend her fallen idol a helping hand.

An entertaining little passage between Edwin Booth and Mrs. Howe was related by my white-haired friend under the elms. Mrs. Barrow was playing Desdemona to Booth's Othello. Booth was invited to a reception at the Beacon street house of Dr. and Mrs. Howe. In course of the evening Mrs. Howe put on an air of great earnestness, and said: "Mr. Booth, give me your promise; you will do me a favor?"

Booth's face fell; he thought he was to be called on for a speech or recitation, devices of the enemy which he hates as heartily as if he had never spoken a line before an audience. He sighed but passed his word. "Promise me," said Mrs. Howe, "that the next time you bring that pillow down you'll do it in earnest." The Desdemona wasn't very thrilling.

The oldest of Boston's notable women is

MISS ELIZABETH PEABODY,

who must be fully eighty-seven. Her personal eccentricities are as marked as the eccentricities of her bonnets, but the milk of human kindness is sweeter in her character than in that of most individuals of a type more normal. She has outlived Mrs. Nathaniel Hawthorne and Mrs. Horace Mann, who were her sisters, and waits with a quiet patience, that is sometimes pathetic, for the end. She will not leave behind her any literary achievement worthy of her gifts, but it was she who first brought to this country from Germany, the kindergarten method of teaching children, and her influence has been strong in the educational world. Mrs. Horace Mann was at one time vice-president of the New England Woman's club, which is older than Sorosis, and has numbered Mrs. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Mrs. Nathaniel P. Willis and Mrs. Howe and Miss Parkman and other notable names among its officers. One associates her with snowdrops, because when her son was a "coach" at Harvard she had always, when they could be found snowdrops in every room of her house in Cambridge.

MRS. ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS-WARD

is a woman whose personal appearance seems to fit in wonderfully with her writings. See her give a little talk to a group of college girls, "her girls" she will call them. As she sits by a small table her chin rests in her left hand and her eyes are on the floor. She looks shy, delicate-featured, and yet there is a strength in her forehead, and in the lines of the eyebrows and the rather large nose. Her hair is drawn smoothly back without crimp or curl and gathered in a heavy knot held by a high-backed comb. Her eyes have rather a sad look that vanishes only when she smiles. She is now, I fancy, younger-looking than before her marriage. At least she has relaxed a little of the sobriety, almost amounting to severity, of her costume. As she begins to speak, though the words are simple, you feel that you are in the presence of a highly organized, sensitive and extremely nervous individual; nervous not being interpreted to mean fidgety, for Mrs. Phelps-Ward's manners are extremely quiet, so quiet that, without a certain instinct to guide you, you would call them reposeful. Her literary collaboration with her husband is apparently going to be successful. One would not have expected it, instances of such success being few and far between.

MRS. LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON

is a bird of passage, spending half of the year with her family in Boston and the other half abroad. Sherwood Bonner used to say of Mrs. Moulton that she belonged to that class of women who seem born to charm, for charm, she continued, is a sweet and comprehensive word, meaning to bewitch, not to madden; to delight not to intoxicate; to satisfy, not to tantalize; to please the soul like the smell of a rose, the song of a brook, the sight of waving fields. In person she is in these latter days matronly of figure and of medium height. Her face is mobile, her hair dark, her voice pleasant, and her manners have the grace and the indescribable charm of one who has lived always among the best of the gently nurtured. Though there were huge posters out calling attention to "what a girl of eighteen can do," while the 15,000 copies of her first book written at that age were selling, she is now judged by her poems, which are often exquisitely finished, her clever short stories and her newspaper correspondence which has been at once excellent and voluminous.

MRS. ABBY MORTON DIAZ,

of the "William Henry Letters," "By Bury to Beacon Street," etc., has a strongly marked New England face and a speech that is racy with quaint wisdom. Her life has not been in all respects easy or pleasant, but like Mrs. Edna D. Cheney and Mrs. Anna Garlin Spencer, she is a notable figure. Nor, though her literary activity has been only secondary, can one pass the name of gentle, motherly, sweetfaced, silver-voiced Lucy Stone, the kindliest and most womanly of all the women who have spoken for woman suffrage.

There have been a dozen descriptions of Margaret Deland's study and as many of her big dog, but my most vivid mental picture of her dates back seven or eight years when a girlish figure in a long coat used to go plunging through the snow along Beacon street, accompanied by the black-coated beast since famous, and sometimes, in the zeal of young housewifery, carrying a market basket.

Of the young literary women of Boston,

MISS SARA ORNE JEWETT

and Mrs. Maud Howe Elliott are the most beautiful. Miss Jewett's gentle Madonna face seems to take every year an added charm. She is dark-haired and graceful and is at her best when, in the drawing room of Mrs. James T. Fields, her intimate friend, she tells you stories of ships and the ocean. Her father was a sea captain from Maine, and the natural flavor comes out in much that she writes, especially in her short stories.

Julia Ward Howe was in her youth beautiful, and she had a beautiful mother, Miss Julia Cutler, of New York, almost as famous for her fair face as one of Mrs. Howe's daughters, Mrs. Maud Howe Elliott, has since been. Mrs. Elliott has probably done more in a literary way than her mother had at her age, but it is evident that with her it will be the story telling, and not the poetic gift that will be cultivated. Perhaps because she has been brought up in a less transcendental age, she attempts no metaphysical essays, but in her foreign and Newport newspaper correspondence has turned quite to the other extreme.

Lucy Larcom's hair is turning white, but it is to be hoped that her singing days are not over. In reckoning up the younger poets one must not forget Louise Imogen Guiney.

Before saying there is no younger generation worthy of those who went before, it must be considered that in the New England

WOMAN'S PRESS ASSOCIATION

Boston has a most energetic body of women, who have the new education of achievement as well as of acquirement, and some of whom have no small share of literary ability. All Bostonians know Mrs. Marion McBride, who founded the National Woman's Press association; and Mrs. Sally Joy White, warm-hearted and energetic, the first newspaper woman in New England; and Mrs. Estelle Hatch Merrill, "Jean Kinclad," of the *Globe*; and Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Blake, the writer of the charming, rambling talks in the *Journal*, signed "M. E. B.;" and Mrs. Isabel C. Barrows, of the *Christian Register*, famous for taking Carl Schurz in shorthand, and a most versatile writer; and Mrs. Ella Farman Pratt, the clever editor of *Wide Awake*; and Mrs. Magennis, of the *Traveler*; and Mrs. M. C. Hungerford, and Miss Lilian Whiting, and Katherine Conway, of the *Pilot*; and Miss Alice Stone Blackwell, of the *Woman's Journal*, and dozens and scores of others, if newspaper columns were made of india rubber and would stretch to take them. Miss Grace Channing has the full measure of the gifts of a gifted family, and indeed there's plenty of vigor in the Hub, though it can't hinder New York from calling it provincial.

ELIZA PUTNAM HEATON.